

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 724
By Graves

A RESOLUTION to commend the Sumner County Emergency Management Agency for its honorable and astute service to the people of Tennessee and to congratulate the agency upon being named Gallatin's 2004 Citizen of the Year.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those estimable public servants who have dedicated themselves to improving the quality of life for their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, the Gallatin 2004 Citizen of the Year award doesn't just embody one citizen but instead recognizes an agency, the Sumner County Emergency Management Agency, its Director, Ken Widener, and the fifty-five volunteers who help to serve the Sumner County area and thus evince the greatest integrity and probity in all their endeavors; and

WHEREAS, the 55 public-spirited citizens who volunteer to serve their fellow community members are an exceptional asset to this State, and under Ken Widener's excellent leadership for the past 22 years, the Sumner County Emergency Management Agency has done much to assist the community during times of crisis and times of joy; and

WHEREAS, the Sumner County Emergency Management Agency was founded during the 1950s by Joe St. Charles, Gallatin's Fire Chief, as the Civil Defense; it later changed into what we now know as a branch of the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency; this estimable group is responsible for Homeland Security and is the first contact made by First Response when emergency situations arise; and

WHEREAS, having started with a lone 12-foot-long boat as its entire complement of equipment, the Sumner County Emergency Management Agency currently commands nine trucks, five boats, several all-terrain vehicles, and a HAZ-MAT Command trailer, and is awaiting the delivery of a Mobile Command Post; and

WHEREAS, some of their duties include immediate response to all emergency water operations, including such tragedies as drownings on the lake or in other bodies of water; they assist with the search for missing persons, also providing tracking dogs to assist in the searches; and

WHEREAS, during times of inclement weather, the Sumner County Emergency Management Agency helps to rescue citizens and assess area damage; during a recent tornado, they were credited for the successful rescue of a Castalian Springs woman who had been trapped in a trailer damaged by the storm; and

WHEREAS, another harrowing experience was when the agency assisted in the emergency landing of a plane on Vietnam Veterans Boulevard last year; and

WHEREAS, the agency also assists the City of Gallatin with its Independence Day celebrations and with the Mainstreet Festival, providing valuable crowd and traffic control; and

WHEREAS, also a philanthropic group, these civic-minded men and women built a community playground, "Project Play", in 1997 next to the Gallatin Civic Center, which has provided a safe place for children to play and has offered many hours of enjoyment for the children of Sumner County; and

WHEREAS, over the past five years, the brave members of the Sumner County Emergency Management Agency have responded to and assisted in the recovery from three major tornadoes and two ice and snow storms. Recently becoming heavily involved with issues of homeland security, the agency has also responded to over sixty potentially deadly Anthrax scares; and

WHEREAS, as with former Directors Ray Canter, James Canter, Bud Belew, and Sony Briggance, current Sumner County Emergency Management Agency Director Ken Widener's remarkable success as a public servant and civic leader is directly attributable to his reliance on the time-honored values of hard work and common sense and his uncommon ability to work well with people from all walks of life; and

WHEREAS, during his time as Director, Mr. Widener has initiated many new programs, including one which has provided all of Sumner County's First Responders, including the Police Departments, Fire Departments, and every ambulance, with Emergency Protection Kits specifically oriented for weapons of mass destruction; and

WHEREAS, the fifty-five volunteers who comprise the Sumner County Emergency Management Agency are extremely brave and giving people who daily reach out with compassion to people whom life has treated unkindly, and they epitomize the ideal of the consummate professional, dedicated public servant, and reliable friend and neighbor; and

WHEREAS, the Sumner County Emergency Management Agency is wholly committed to the noble precepts of public service that have earned Tennessee recognition as the "Volunteer State," and its dedicated professionals and volunteers should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby commend the Sumner County Emergency Management Agency for honorable and astute service to the good people of Tennessee and to Sumner County, and congratulate the agency upon being honored as the Gallatin 2004 Citizen of the Year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.